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AN INDIAN MYTH OF THE SAN JOAQUIN BASIN.

WHILE engaged in research in California for the Field Columbian Museum I found a myth, evidently of very ancient origin, one phase of which bears upon the prehistoric topography of a certain section of the San Joaquin Valley.

From the Sacramento River in mid California there stretches southward a wide level plain some three hundred miles in length, which is walled in on three sides by the Sierras and Coast Range Mountains. This territory of some 20,000 square miles was once entirely held by two linguistic stocks of Indians: the Mariposans on the south occupied Tulare Basin, while the Moquelumnians to the north covered the San Joaquin Plains and extended northward almost around San Francisco Bay. There is evidence that the numerical strength of each family was in proportion to the extent of their territories, thus presuming that the mentalities of these two peoples were far more widely disseminated than any others of aboriginal California. The paltry remnants of this multitude are now scattered along the western slopes of the Sierra Mountains, and in each settlement I found one or more ancient representative of tribes otherwise extinct, each of whom, in their several tongues and dialects, repeated with singular consistency the following myth. This version is from a Mariposan native of the south fork of the Tule River:

"Once a man lived with his wife up the cañon. She was a handsome woman and he loved her much. One time they quarrelled and she died from his beating. He was sorry and cried aloud. He found no comfort. He ate nothing, and lay down beside her grave. He lay there continually for three days and three nights fasting. During the fourth night he was crying for her to come back to him. As the great star stood overhead he felt the ground tremble and saw the earth moving on her grave. The clouds rolled back and she arose and stood brushing from herself every speck of dust until she was clean. He stared, but was silent (a man dies instantly when speaking to a ghost). She started away. She went swiftly down toward Tóxīl (the point of sunset) and he ran after her weeping. She often turned and warned him back, declaring that she was bound for the Tib'ík-nītc, the home of the dead. He still pursued her for four days and four nights when they reached Tó-līt, a great roaring water. She mounted a bridge, slender and fragile like a spider's web, and began to cross over. He cried aloud with beseeching gestures. She turned. She pitied him. She stretched a hand toward him, and he felt strong and comforted. He sprang upon the bridge, but she would not suffer his touch. They crossed on Tcé-

laul in this manner. Tcé-laul is long, very long, but the spirits of the good cross it easily; the bad fall off and turn into *ép'is* (pike fish), who must swim back to feed the living. The man saw a great land, a rich land, a warm, fruitful land, and people from all the world. He saw all kinds of different peoples, and they lived peaceably together, for there was plenty for all. The woman told him to observe closely; for he must return and tell all to his people before he died on the fourth day. He did so. She took him back across Tcé-laul and he ran home. He told all to his kin people and died on the fourth day as predicted."

This translation follows the original very closely, only omitting the Indians' repetitions, when emphasizing a point. Another Mariposan rendition, given me in Madera County by a member of the Teuk-tcān'-si tribe, is as follows: —

"A certain man had a beautiful wife and he loved her. One time they quarrelled, and he killed her unintentionally. He grieved over it greatly, and lay by her grave three nights and three days. In the fourth night he saw the ground heave up, and she was pushed upon the surface. She was loaded with all her burial gifts. She bade him not to follow her, but he sprang up and ran with her towards Xó-cum (the north). They ran a long distance until they came to Hó-hǒ, a tumbling, furious river. He cried out to her, but she ran out upon a very long, flimsy bridge (*tá-la-mûtc*), upon which no human can balance. He fell to the sand shrieking. Then she turned and beckoned him on, but would not touch him. His living scent was too strong. She guided him safely over the bridge, and the other shore was all dark. She said, 'Wait a while and there will be light.' Then great blue and red fires flashed up and went out again. They lighted up everything, and he saw a great country. He saw many kinds of people. He saw his dead relatives and friends. He saw a long line of little babies moving silently back across the bridge. They were coming here to our women. He had time to see everything in that land before the woman took him over the bridge again. She bade him tell his people all the wonders and then return to her on the third day. He ran back and called his tribe together and related all he had seen. He finished telling it and died."

It will be noticed that this rendition differs somewhat from the first; but in reality the originals seem to me, from my very limited knowledge of the Mariposan tongue, to be almost duplicates. One point of divergence is the direction the pair travelled, and which my interpreter promptly admitted, saying that this was due to the location of the tribe telling it. In fact I noted that the most southern tribes of Mariposans placed their Tīb'-ik-nītc almost to the true

west, and as I travelled northward, each successive tribe moved this mythical point farther from the west, till the San Joaquin Mariposans indicated almost compass north, or a variation of about eighty degrees within 150 miles. Another interesting point in this myth lies in the fact that a number of archaic words are found, identical in every version and which could not be translated by the Indians.

On reaching the Moquelumnian peoples I heard this same myth repeated in the several dialects of some ten tribes, and though the birthplaces of these ancient relicts were, in extreme cases, over 200 miles apart, they were unanimous in placing their O-ló-wi-ta (the place of their spiritual genesis and exodus) to the west northwest. A very intelligent Indian living on the Merced River below Yosemite Valley sums up the opinions of his people in the following observation: "When an Indian dies his spirit goes on, on, on, to O-ló-wín (pointing westward). That is a big place, and a long, long ways off, and no live man can go to that place. Only the dead peoples. When a man is dead four days his spirit gets loose and packs up everything and comes up and lights right out this way (pointing). No kind of hill can stop it. It stays around here four days and watches its chance to get away from the Devil. The Devil keeps it corralled, but we all pray and the spirit gets away all right. We pray to God. I don't know where he is. Maybe above somewhere. The spirit moves along night and day. It knows the road all right; for it has been that way before. We don't know when, but we all say that we all of us come from there. Even our little children know that trail. Yes, there is water, plenty of waters, big, this way (the arms are whirled in every direction). No, there is no boat about it. A bridge, a fine fragile long bridge, more than a mile, maybe a hundred miles, a thousand miles long. The soul takes everything along. Now, since we bury everything, I don't know about it. If the soul should drop off that bridge into the water it turns at once to hó-lo-mai (pike fish) and swims off. I never saw the ocean. That is the place we get our shells. That is-not O-ló-wín; for O-ló-wín is land, plenty, big, fine, green, warm place, plenty game and seeds and fish. You call that Hé-wín (heaven). That is the place."

I have intimated at the beginning of this paper that the Moquelumnians and Mariposans were Plains-People, being separated at the European's advent by a slight but well recognized ridge across the plains near its longitudinal centre. But we find no tradition in either tongue speaking of themselves other than as highlanders, dwellers in cedar and pine groves; near rushing streams and glaciers, and that their west was bounded by a sea of dimensions mysterious to them. The physical conformation of this basin leaves us little doubt that such a sea did once exist.

J. W. Hudson.